Household repair tips

Spring: Time to fix 'em up

Spring cleaning time also is a great time to do repair jobs around the home.

Before painting, refinishing or restyling furniture, make the needed repairs, said Katherine L. Habel, Virginia Tech Extension Specialist in home furnishings. "It will extend the life of the piece."

The covering material on a great many tables and counter tops is plastic laminate. The adhesive to use is contact cement, which is available at most paint and hardware stores.

Apply a coating of cement to both laminate and counter or table top and let dry. Then, press the laminate in place. The bond is instantaneous on contact.

When the laminate merely is loose, lift up the loose edge as far as possible. Load the brush with cement, then lay globs of it between the laminate and the top, trying to cover both surfaces and get the tightest corner.

Press the laminate down firmly. Immediately lift it, then prop it up so the two surfaces are completely separated. Leave it to dry.

It is at the proper stage of dryness if, when you gently touch the cement, none of it sticks to your fingers. Then press the laminate down firmly and pound it hard with your hand.

"Sometimes loose laminate, even just a little, is a symptom of overall bad adhesion," said faculty member in Tech's College of Home Economics.

"As you lift the loose part, slide your hand underneath to see if you can loosen the laminate farther. If you can, the entire top needs recementing. For this job you might need to call for help," she said.

If the furniture has a loose nail or screw, the trouble may be that the hole has become too large for it. Get the next size larger nail or screw and it will stay in.

Or remove it and stick a toothpick in the hold or push a tiny bit of steel wool in the hole. Replace the nail or screw and it should stay in place, Miss Habel said.

A crooked picture is a worrisome item. Door banging and varied vibrations can jar a picture out of line. When the picture is straight, fix the wire or cord at the balance point to resist sliding. If it's wire, crimp it with your fingers; if cord, make a little loop.

Also, cut two pieces, about a quarter inch each, from a small pencil eraser. Use glue to fasten the slices at the lower corners on the back of the frame where it touches the wall.

The rubber will provide further resistance against the picture's moving. Air can

(Cont'd on Page 3)

Shade trees: pretty, plus

Shade trees add such grace and beauty to your home that it seems unpardonably aloof to say they're "cost effective."

But they are, according to George Moeller, director of the urban forestry research program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service. He says that the high cost of heating and cooling fuels is sharpening people's awareness of what trees can do."

Most of us are concerned with conserving energy these days, especially when it comes to heating and cooling our homes. Many people don't realize that a few carefully selected and strategically placed trees around their home can significantly reduce heating bills in the winter and cooling costs in the summer.

For instance, in the winter cold air moving into the average home through openings around doors and windows, and other gaps in the structure, normally causes the loss of about one third of the heat within the home. A moderate breeze of about 15 miles per hour can increase that loss to as much as two-thirds. Planting a dense row of evergreen trees on the windward side of your house can dramatically reduce the influence of the wind on home heating. Research has shown that this relatively simple and inexpensive procedure of planting a windbreak can reduce the annual home fuel bill by as much as 20 percent. Large evergreens such as pines, spruces, and hemlocks are most effective, and their effectiveness can be enhanced by a row of smaller shrub or tree evergreens, such as yew or juniper, on the windward side of the large trees.

Planting deciduous trees on the east, west and south sides of your house can result in year-round savings.

The deciduous trees can help cool your house by screening hot sunlight from the windows, and by creating shade on the roof and sides of the house. In addition, the trees help cool the surrounding environment by returning moisture to the air from the surface of their leaves. In winter, their bare branches allow sunlight to come through and warm the house. The trees should be large enough and placed in such a way that shade falls on the roofs and sides of the house during the afternoon. Maple, oak, ash and linden are good trees for this use.

Trees can also help increase the value of your house. Studies have shown that a home with several attractive shade trees in the yard can usually be sold for about 15 percent more that an identical house with none.

Trees provide numerous other benefits to homeowners which cannot be measured in dollars and cents. Forest Service research has shown that more than 50 percent of America's urban residents enjoy watching and feeding birds. Planting trees in your yard can help bring more birds into urban communities. Both deciduous and evergreen trees are needed to attract them. Evergreens are especially important to provide cover and shelter for them in the winter.

Around the home large, dense trees can help clean the air we breathe by trapping dust particles. Shade trees can capture 27 to 38 percent of the dust particles and nine to 13 percent of the gas-like suspended particles floating in our air, before we have a chance to inhale them.

Screens to block out unsightly views, reduce noise, and create privacy are other reasons to plant trees. Evergreens are more effective than deciduous trees for this use. Aborvitae and upright yews make effective narrow visual screens, but larger and wider plantings such as those used for windbreaks are most effective for noise abatement.

Check with your local nursery operator before you buy.

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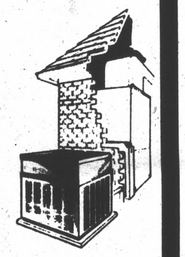

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Home improvement: the 'in' thing

Homeowners today are anything but "on the move."

Tight mortgage monies, spiraling interest rates and rising inflation have caused them to take a second look at their homes. The result has led to a surge in home remodeling that the U. S. Census Bureau estimates will equal or exceed that of homebuilding expenditures this year.

According to John Hammon, executive vice president of the National Home Improvement Council, "All signs indicate that remodeling, which has consistently been on the rise for the past 30 years, will continue to grow at a rate of approximately 15 percent in the next few years."

And, although the do-it-yourself segment of the remodeling market seems to be growing at a rapid rate, Hammon added that, "70.4 percent of the total market is still professionally installed remodeling."

But, if money is so tight, why are people willing to remodel?

One reason is the aging housing stock. Although there are more than 78 million homes and apartments in this country, at least half are more than 17 years old. To maintain this aging housing stock, remodeling is essential.

Secondly, the growing concern for energy conservation, sparked by ever increasing utility and fuel costs, has motivated homeowners into updating their homes' energy efficiency through remodeling.

"The fact that reinsulation and replacement windows, storm doors and windows remain two of the most popular home improvement projects easily verifies this point," according to Hammon.

"And, since a house is probably the largest investment a family or individual is likely to make, remodeling is a way of investing in an investment," he added.

According to NHIC's **Green Book of Home Improvement Contractors**, the most popular home improvement projects are reinsulation, reroofing, residing, replacement windows, storm doors and windows.

Repair time

(Cont'd from Page 2)

circulate freely behind the picture and that dirty outline won't be formed on the wall around the picture.

Be organized in keeping track of all the housekeeping hints you know too, said the specialist. Make a file and keep the ideas orderly. This file could be the same one where measurements of windows, floors, furniture and labels on care are stored.

"The keeping of this reference up-to-date is a good job for the junior members of the household. What better way to learn the value of records and instructions," said Miss Habel.

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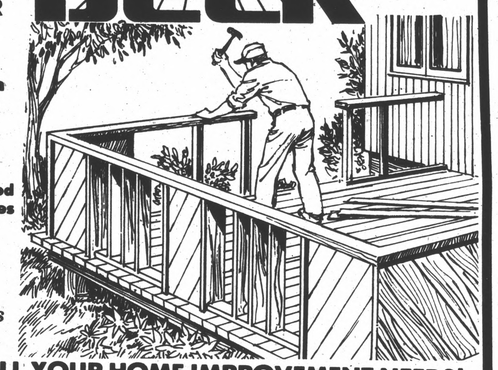

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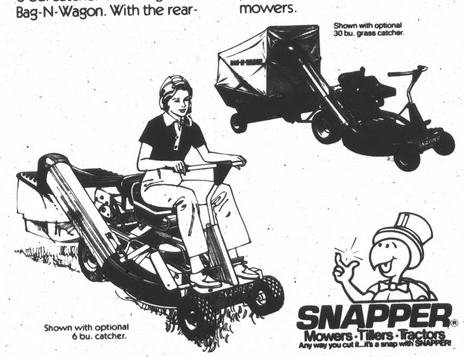

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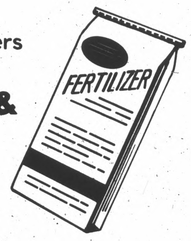

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